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UTM EatWell

What are Omega-3 fats?

Known for their benefits in protecting against heart disease in older adults and for their role in brain and eye development in babies, **omega-3 fats** are vital for good health in people of all ages... and many of us don't get enough in our diet.

Sufficient intake of omega-3 fat promotes optimal health, as they act as an anti-inflammatory agent and a mild blood thinner.

Omega-3's offer protection against heart disease, and possibly breast and prostate cancer; they have also been shown to help improve symptoms in people with conditions such as asthma, arthritis, Crohn's disease, depression, hypertension, psoriasis, and ulcerative colitis.

Omega-3 fatty acids are found in 3 forms:

ALA (alpha-linolenic acid)

DHA (docosahexaenoic acid)

EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid)

EPA and DHA are especially important for good health, and are primarily founds in fatty fish such as salmon, trout, herring, mackerel, halibut, and tuna. Other sources of EPA/DHA are shrimp and omega-3-enhanced eggs.

Some plant foods, like walnuts, flaxseeds, canola or soybeans oils also contain omega-3s, but only in the ALA form, which has not proven as beneficial as EPA/DHA in research studies.

What about supplements?

If you don't like to eat fish, consider taking an omega-3 supplement. Talk to a doctor, pharmacist, or dietitian about how much to take.

There are also a variety of foods (eggs, yogurt, margarine) that are enhanced with omega-3s. Some of these have fish oils added, so always read the label carefully if you have a fish allergy. If you are allergic to fish, or follow a vegan diet, you won't get the benefits of EPA/DHA from fish but you can still get ALA (which your body can partially convert into EPA/DHA) non-fish sources of omega-3s.

Best non-fish sources of omega-3s (ALA only)

- Beans (kidney, navy, pinto, etc.), edamame (baby soybeans)
- Eggs and omega-3 enriched eggs
- Flaxseeds or flaxseed oil
- Pecans
- Soybeans or soybean oil
- Tofu
- Walnuts or walnut oil

Eat fish twice a week (at least 75 g/2.5 oz. portion) as recommended on *Canada's Food Guide*.

Eating well can help you maintain the energy and concentration you need to succeed.

This easy fish recipe takes less than 30 minutes and makes enough for 2 people (and maybe even leftovers to be reheated the next day). Heat up a packet a ready-cooked microwavable brown rice like Uncle Ben's® Bistro Express and some frozen vegetables, and you have complete and healthy meal with a good source of omega-3 fats!



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Best sources of omega 3s (EPA/DHA & ALA)

- Anchovies
- Arctic char
- Cod
- Crab
- Halibut
- Mackerel
- Salmon
- Sardines
- Sole
- Tilapia
- Trout
- Tuna
- White fish

Easy Oven-Baked Fish

Delicious, easy, and good-for-you!

Makes 4 servings, ready in 20 minutes

Ingredients

- 500 g (~1 lb.) firm white fish, such as tilapia, cod, mackerel or halibut
- 1 egg
- 250 mL (1 cup) dry breadcrumbs
- 5 mL (1 teaspoon) Italian seasoning or Mrs. Dash seasoning (salt-free spice mixture)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 230° C (450° F)

- 1) Take an oven-proof baking sheet and cover it with aluminum foil (make clean up easier).
- 2) In a large shallow bowl, beat egg. In a second large shallow bowl, combine breadcrumbs, seasonings, paprika, salt and pepper.
- 3) Take a piece of fish and pat it dry with a paper towel. Then dip the fish, first into the beaten egg, then into the breadcrumb mixture. Place on the baking sheet, and repeat with each piece of fish.
- 4) Place baking sheet into oven, and bake for 5 minutes.
- 5) Flip the fish over and continue cooking for about 3 – 5 more minutes (or until fish is cooked through).

Serve with brown rice and cooked vegetables like peas. Garnish with lemon wedge and Parmesan cheese shavings, if you like.

Nutrition Information (per serving): 195 calories; 3.2 g fat, 12.1 g carbohydrate (2 g fibre), 29.4 g protein, 248 mg sodium.

Concerned about mercury and fish consumption? Eating fish provides more benefits than harm.

Some helpful tips for limiting mercury intake:

- (1) limit or avoid fresh and frozen tuna steaks, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy, and escolar as these tend to have the highest mercury content
- (2) choose "light" tuna (skipjack, yellowfin or tongol). It has less mercury than "white" tuna (albacore, bluefin) tuna and is generally less expensive
- (3) click here to read [Health Canada's "Mercury: Your Healthy and the Environment"](#) for more information